The Buddha Tooth Relics: Special Research on the Broken Front Tooth Relics

By- Sao Dhammasami @ Bhikkhu Indasoma Siridantamahapalaka
Freelance Researcher/Founder/Custodian of Tooth Relics
The Office Of Siridantamahapalaka
The Hswagata Buddha Tooth Relics Preservation Private Museum
Website - www.siridantamahapalaka.com
Email- saodhammasami@siridantamahapalaka.com
ORCID- https://orcid.org/0009-0000-0697-4760
DOI- **10.5281/zenodo.18108174**

Abstract

Buddha relics are very important in Buddhism. People believe they connect them to the Buddha and his teaching. Tooth relics are a special type of body relic. They are linked with stories of the Buddha's cremation and the early spread of Buddhism. This paper studies Buddha tooth relics using ASI and related government sources, archaeology reports, and the book *Custodians of the Buddha's Sacred Relics*. The main focus is a rare object called the **Broken Front Tooth Relic**, described as a small fragment of a broken front tooth kept inside a silver reliquary from the Kamari Stupa area near Kabul.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

In Buddhism, a **relic** is something that remains after the Buddha's death, or something strongly linked to him. Many relics are **body relics**, like bones or teeth. Other relics are **contact relics**, like objects used by him, or places linked to his life.

Relics became central to Buddhist devotion. They were often placed inside **stupas**. A stupa is a mound-like religious monument. People visit stupas to show respect, make offerings, and remember the Buddha.

A key early text is the **Mahāparinibbāna Sutta**, which tells the story of the Buddha's last days, cremation, and the distribution of remains. A modern government brief from India repeats a related belief: during cremation, several parts such as the forehead bone, **four teeth**, and two ribs were not reduced to ashes, while many other parts became relics of different sizes. (Embassy of India Hanoi)

1.2 Why tooth relics matter

Tooth relics matter for three main reasons.

1. **Religious meaning**: Many Buddhists see a tooth relic as a living sign of the Buddha's presence.
2. **History and politics**: In some places, rulers used the tooth relic to support their power and public role.
3. **Archaeology and evidence**: Some tooth or bone relics are found inside sealed reliquaries. In some cases, inscriptions also describe the relics.

1.3 Aim of the paper

This paper has two main aims:

- To describe and compare important Buddha relic sites, especially those connected with teeth and body relics.
- To give special research on the **Broken Front Tooth Relic**, including what it is, where it came from, how it was found, and why it is special.

1.4 Paper structure

The paper follows seven academic parts:

1. Introduction
2. Literature Review
3. Methodology
4. Results/Findings (with a table and a special subsection on the Broken Front Tooth Relic)
5. Discussion
6. Conclusion
7. References

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2. Literature Review

2.1 ASI and related official sources

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is the main government body for archaeology and protected monuments in India. Its publication lists and excavation report pages show the wide range of ASI excavation work. (ASI)

For Buddhist relic research, **Indian Archaeology – A Review** is important. It reports field seasons and results. For example, the 1976–77 volume records ASI excavation work at **Piprahwa and Ganwaria** under K. M. Srivastava, including aims like understanding the site plan and layers. (nmma.nic.in)

A Government of India press document (for a relic exposition) gives clear details about Piprahwa relic custody today. It states that ASI excavations at Piprahwa (1971–77) discovered two inscribed caskets with 22 sacred bone relics, and that many fragments are in the National Museum, New Delhi.

Another strong official source is a Government of India brief about the **Sarnath relics** and the **Nagarjunakonda relic** history. It states that a relic found at Nagarjunakonda was discovered by A. H. Longhurst in 1929 in a large stupa, and that this stupa is described in inscriptions as the "Mahāchetiya" (Great Stupa) of the Blessed One (the Buddha). It also describes how this relic was presented for enshrinement at Sarnath in 1932. (Embassy of India Hanoi)

2.2 The book: *Custodians of the Buddha's Sacred Relics*

The book *Custodians of the Buddha's Sacred Relics* is central for this paper because it gathers histories, objects, and present-day custodianship.

It also lists several famous tooth relic places, such as:

- Sri Lanka (Kandy)
- China (Beijing)
- Myanmar
- Thailand

  and others.

Most importantly for this research, the book describes a special tooth relic object called the **Broken Front Tooth Relic**. It says this is a small fragment of a broken front tooth kept in a silver reliquary, linked with a relic chamber inside the Kamari Stupa area near Kabul.

2.3 Other scholars and reliable sources

Modern research on tooth relics includes both history and science.

- A recent open-access medical and dental study reviews claimed tooth relics around the world and lists major sites such as Sri Lanka (Kandy) and China (Beijing Lingguang Temple), while also noting other claimed relic places. (PMC)
- A major historical study by John S. Strong examines the Portuguese capture and reported destruction of a tooth relic in Goa in 1561. This shows that tooth relics could become political and religious targets. (OUP Academic)
- Work on Piprahwa includes early publication by W. C. Peppé (1898) and later academic debate. The Peppé report is widely cited as the first detailed modern publication of the find. (Cambridge University Press & Assessment)
- A later scholarly paper by Harry Falk discusses the Piprahwa finds and later excavation results, showing how debate continued and how archaeology was used to reassess the site. (THE PIPRAHWA PROJECT)

2.4 Debates on authenticity

Relic authenticity is debated because:

- Some relics come from controlled excavations, sealed chambers, and inscriptions. This supports stronger confidence.
- Other relics come from later traditions, unclear movements, or political use. These need careful analysis.
- Even when archaeology is strong, identifying the relic as “the Buddha’s” remains difficult, because science cannot easily prove identity. Many conclusions depend on inscriptions, context, and tradition.

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3. Methodology

3.1 Data collection

This paper uses a **document review** method.

1. **ASI and official sources**
    - ASI publication lists and excavation reporting pages. (ASI)
    - *Indian Archaeology – A Review* volumes for Piprahwa and other sites. (nmma.nic.in)
    - Government briefs on relic custody and exposition.
2. **Primary book source**
    - *Custodians of the Buddha's Sacred Relics* for object descriptions, custodians, and the Broken Front Tooth Relic.
3. **Other reliable sources**
    - Peer-reviewed and academic sources on Piprahwa, tooth relic history, and modern study lists. (THE PIPRAHWA PROJECT)

3.2 How the information was analyzed

- I grouped data by **site**, **object type**, and **evidence type** (inscription, sealed reliquary, reported custody).
- I compared Indian sites in a table.
- I created a special subsection for the Broken Front Tooth Relic and described it in detail using the book source.

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4. Results / Findings

4.1 What Buddha tooth relics are

A Buddha tooth relic is believed to be a tooth of the Buddha. In Buddhist tradition, teeth are special because they are hard and can remain after cremation. An Indian government brief repeats the belief that four teeth were not reduced to ash in the cremation story. (Embassy of India Hanoi)

Tooth relics can be:

- **Large and complete**, like a canine tooth in some traditions.
- **Small fragments**, like a broken piece kept in a reliquary, which is important for this paper.

4.2 Major tooth relic traditions and present-day claims

Many countries and temples claim to hold a Buddha tooth relic.

- The book source lists famous tooth relic locations and traditions in Asia.
- Modern academic and scientific reviews also list major sites and classify which are widely accepted and which are claims. (PMC)
- In Sri Lanka, the Temple of the Tooth tradition is one of the most famous. A government brief from India also mentions that the tooth relic linked to Kalinga was later taken to Sri Lanka and is venerated at Kandy. (Embassy of India Hanoi)

4.3 Archaeological and historical evidence from key sites

4.3.1 Piprahwa / Kapilavastu area (Uttar Pradesh)

Piprahwa is one of the most famous sites linked to the Buddha's relic distribution story (the Śākyas of Kapilavastu).

- ASI's *Indian Archaeology 1976–77 – A Review* reports excavation activity at Piprahwa and the nearby site Ganwaria under K. M. Srivastava, with clear research aims and work details. (nmma.nic.in)
- A Government of India document states that ASI excavations at Piprahwa (1971–77) found two inscribed steatite relic caskets with 22 sacred bone fragments in total. It also states present custody details in Indian museums.
- Scholarly work continues to discuss Piprahwa's meaning and dating, including discussion of re-excavations and interpretation. (THE PIPRAHWA PROJECT)
- The first major modern report on the original 1898 discovery was published by W. C. Peppé. (Cambridge University Press & Assessment)

Finding: Piprahwa is central for Buddha relic research, but most evidence is for **bone relics and reliquary deposits**, not clearly for tooth relics.

4.3.2 Nagarjunakonda (Andhra Pradesh region)

Nagarjunakonda is a major Buddhist valley site, with many monasteries and stupas.

An Indian government brief gives a detailed history:

- A relic was found in 1929 by A. H. Longhurst in a large stupa at Nagarjunakonda.
- The stupa is described in inscriptions as the “Mahāchetiya” (Great Stupa) of the Blessed One (the Buddha).
- The relic was later presented for enshrinement at Sarnath (Mūlagandhakuti Vihāra) in 1932. (Embassy of India Hanoi)

Finding: Nagarjunakonda has strong official reporting for a relic linked to the Buddha, connected with inscription language and formal presentation history.

4.3.3 Sarnath (Uttar Pradesh) and relic enshrinement

Sarnath is a major Buddhist site where the Buddha gave the first sermon.

A government brief states that sacred relics are enshrined at Mūlagandhakuti Vihāra in Sarnath. It also describes how relics were presented and enshrined, including a relic linked to Nagarjunakonda. (Embassy of India Hanoi)

Finding: Sarnath is a key modern place for public enshrinement and viewing of relics, supported by official history of transfer and safeguarding.

4.3.4 Tooth and bone relics in a stupa context (example from ASI review)

Not every tooth found in a stupa is the Buddha’s tooth. But archaeology shows how tooth and bone relic deposits worked.

In *Indian Archaeology 1984–85 – A Review*, one excavation report describes a stupa where deep digging produced “ashes, charcoal, a casket base … a tooth and some fragmentary bones,” and the casket lid has a Kharoṣṭhī inscription naming a donor (Upāsaka Ayabhadra). (nmma.nic.in)

Finding: Archaeology shows that tooth relic deposits could be placed in caskets with inscriptions. This helps us understand how relic worship was practiced and recorded.

4.4 Table: Comparison of key ASI-related relic sites in India

Site (State)	Type of relic evidence	Main source evidence	Notes on tooth link
Piprahwa / Ganwaria (Uttar Pradesh)	Inscribed caskets, bone relic fragments, excavation layers	ASI field reporting in *Indian Archaeology 1976–77*; Govt document on ASI excavation results and custody (nmma.nic.in)	Mainly bone relics; tooth not central in the main ASI summary used here
Nagarjunakonda (Andhra region)	Relic found in stupa; inscription calls it Mahāchetiya of the Buddha; formal transfer to Sarnath	Govt brief describing discovery (1929) and enshrinement (1932) (Embassy of India Hanoi)	Official source supports Buddha relic link; the tooth claim exists in wider public sources, but the brief here names it as a relic without specifying tooth
Sarnath (Uttar Pradesh)	Relics enshrined and displayed at Mūlagandhakuti Vihāra	Govt brief on Sarnath relics and annual exposition (Embassy of India Hanoi)	Site is important for custody and public viewing, not the findspot
Sanghol-type stupa example (Punjab)	Tooth + bones + inscribed lid naming donor	ASI *Indian Archaeology 1984–85* (nmma.nic.in)	Shows how tooth relic deposits can be recorded, but the named relic is not the Buddha's

4.5 Special subsection: The Broken Front Tooth Relics

4.5.1 What it is

The **Broken Front Tooth Relic** is described as **a small fragment of a broken front tooth**. It is kept in a **cylindrical beaten silver reliquary with a domed lid**.

This is important because many famous tooth relic claims are for large teeth (like canines). But this object is clearly a **fragment**, and it is described in a careful object style, with container type and form.

4.5.2 Where it was found (reported)

In the book source, this relic is linked to the **Kamari Stupa area near Kabul**. The same section describes a relic chamber:

- The relic chamber was formed by **six rectangular cut stones** set like a square.
- The square is described as about **30.5 cm** across.
- The silver reliquary was in this chamber, and the tooth fragment was inside the silver reliquary.

This kind of report matches a common pattern in stupa archaeology: a protected inner deposit, often in a chamber or core, with a reliquary container inside.

4.5.3 Who found it and early history

The book section links the find with early exploration and collectors. It mentions that the relic chamber was located and opened, and that the tooth fragment was inside the silver reliquary. It also connects the deposit with other objects like coins in the same context.

Because this paper is careful, we should state the limits:

- The book gives a clear **object description** and **find context summary**.
- For full verification, scholars would want the full excavation record, museum accession records, and scientific imaging.
- Still, even with limits, the description is strong enough to treat this relic as a serious case study of a tooth fragment kept as a sacred relic.

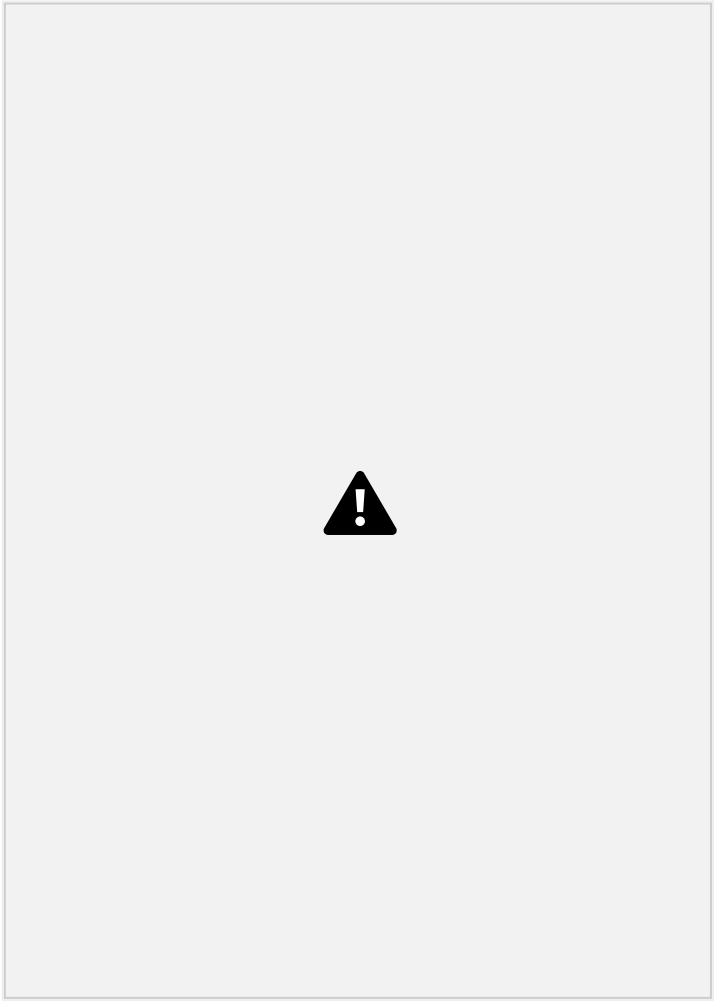
4.5.4 Why it is special

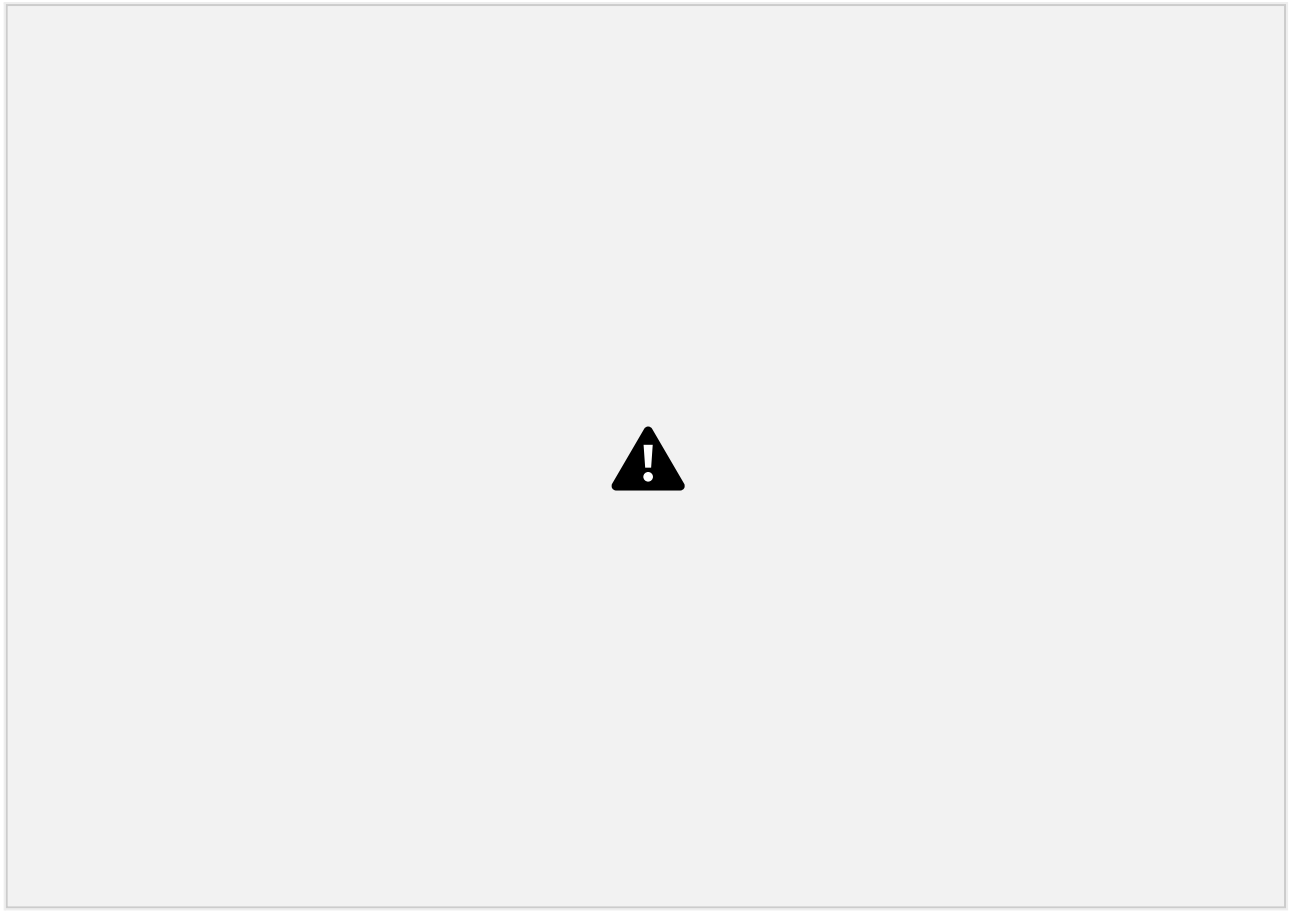
The Broken Front Tooth Relic is special for several reasons:

1. **It is a fragment, not a full tooth**
   This shows that even small pieces could be treated as sacred and worthy of careful enshrinement.
2. **It has a clear reliquary container type**
   The silver reliquary form (cylinder, domed lid) fits known reliquary traditions in the wider Buddhist world, where precious metals protect sacred remains.
3. **It is tied to a relic chamber description**
   The report of a stone-built chamber suggests a planned sacred deposit, not a casual keeping of an object.
4. **It supports the wider tooth relic story**
   The government brief about relics and teeth after cremation shows why teeth became central in tradition. (Embassy of India Hanoi)
   The Broken Front Tooth Relic fits this tradition, but in a very physical and material way: a real fragment inside a container.

4.6 images -

1. **image:** Photo or image of the **Broken Front Tooth Relic in its silver reliquary**





4.7 Global “living” tooth relic shrines (where people worship today)

Buddha tooth relics are not only items in museums. Many are still active in worship. These places show how relics shape religion, culture, and even modern diplomacy.

4.7.1 Sri Lanka: Kandy and the “Temple of the Tooth”

The most famous tooth relic shrine in the Theravada world is in **Kandy, Sri Lanka**. The temple is widely known as the **Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic**. It is a major pilgrimage place. (Wikipedia)

Many Sri Lankan stories say the relic is a **left canine tooth** taken from the Buddha’s cremation and later brought to Sri Lanka. These stories are part of Sri Lankan Buddhist identity. (PMC)

Sri Lanka also had older tooth-relic shrines in past capitals, like **Polonnaruwa**, where a building like **Hatadage** is described as a place that once kept the tooth relic. (Wikipedia)

4.7.2 China: Lingguang Temple and the Tooth Relic Pagoda (Beijing)

In China, a very well-known tooth relic is linked to **Lingguang Temple** in **Beijing**. Lingguang Temple is connected with the **Buddha Tooth Relic Pagoda**. (Wikipedia)

Modern state sources in Thailand also describe this relic as a national treasure of China and a sacred object respected by Buddhists. (Thailand Government Public Relations)

A key point today is that China sometimes “loans” this relic for special events. In Thailand, official sources describe the Bangkok enshrinement plan and the dates. (กระทรวงการต่างประเทศ)

4.7.3 Thailand as a host country (tooth relic on loan, 2002 and 2024–2025)

This Thailand case is useful for research because it shows how tooth relics can work as **religious objects and diplomatic symbols** at the same time.

An AP report says the relic was flown from Lingguang Temple and welcomed by a large public procession in Bangkok. It also notes that “competing claims” about Buddha’s tooth exist in different countries, which raises questions about provenance. (AP News)

Thai government sources also explain that a special pavilion was built at Sanam Luang to house the relic during the display period. (Thailand Government Public Relations)

4.7.4 Singapore: Buddha Tooth Relic Temple and Museum (modern claim + public debate)

Singapore has a famous modern building called the **Buddha Tooth Relic Temple and Museum**. It was built to house a tooth relic claim. (National Library Board)

A key part of the global debate is that several **dental experts** were quoted as saying the tooth's size and shape do not match a human tooth, and that it likely belongs to a large animal (such as cow/buffalo). (National Library Board)

There are also reports that the temple dismissed requests for DNA tests. This shows a tension between **faith-based value** and **science-based testing**. (buddhistchannel.tv)

4.7.5 Taiwan: Fo Guang Shan Buddha Museum (gift + certificate model)

Taiwan has another major tooth relic tradition at the **Fo Guang Shan Buddha Museum**. The museum says a Tibetan lama, **Kunga Dorje Rinpoche**, entrusted a Buddha tooth relic to **Master Hsing Yun** in **1998**. It also says there was a **certificate signed/authenticated by twelve Rinpoches**. (fgsbmc.org.tw)

This is a different "evidence model." It is not based on excavation. It is based on **custodianship**, religious authority, and a document of authentication within a Buddhist network. (fgsbmc.org.tw)

4.7.6 Myanmar: local pagodas and "replica" tooth relics

Myanmar is important because it shows another category: **replica relics** and **regional relic culture**.

One official Shwedagon source describes a **replica** of the Buddha's sacred tooth relic donated in **June 2013** by Lingguang Monastery/Temple in Beijing and venerated at its current location. (shwedagonpagoda.org.mm)

Another Myanmar source (ITBMU) links a "Sacred Tooth Relic Pagoda" (Shwedo Phaya) to a modern construction setting (1996). (itbmu.org.mm)

Myanmar also has older pagoda traditions that claim to enshrine a tooth (or replica). For example, Shwezigon Pagoda is described as believed to enshrine a bone and tooth, and it even notes "replica" ideas in some sources. (Wikipedia)

4.8 Global archaeological tooth relic deposits

The book **Custodians of the Buddha's Sacred Relics Vol. 1** describes several excavated stupas and reliquaries in the wider Gandhara region (today's Afghanistan and Pakistan areas) that were reported to contain tooth relics.

4.8.1 Ahin Posh Stupa (near Jalalabad, Afghanistan)

The book reports that excavations found a **gold reliquary** containing **five tooth relics wrapped in cloth**, plus other objects like coins and silver rods.

This kind of deposit is important because it combines:

- a stupa context,
- a sealed reliquary,
- and associated dating clues like coins.

4.8.2 Sihanada Stupa (Kapisa region; silver reliquary + inscription claim)

The book describes a **silver reliquary casket** with an early **Kharoṣṭhī inscription**, and says the casket contained sacred relics including a **tooth relic** and **bone ash**.

If an inscription truly names Buddha relics, that is stronger than a plain relic without text. But it still does not prove the biological identity of the tooth. It mainly proves what donors *believed* and *declared*.

4.8.3 Other reported Gandhara-area tooth relic contexts (examples in the book)

The book also reports tooth relic finds linked with other stupas and collections, including:

- **Sakawagunti Stupa (Hadda)** described as having "Buddha tooth relics."
- **Dir Museum (Chakdara, Pakistan)** described as keeping tooth-like remains linked to a stupa context, while noting debates about authenticity.

These examples show that tooth relic talk is not only from later legends. It also appears in the archaeology of stupas and reliquaries, although the identity claim is still hard to prove.

4.9 Table: Global tooth relic sites and “evidence strength” (simple comparison)

Site / Country	What is claimed	Main evidence type	What makes it stronger	What makes it weaker	Evidence level (for historians)
Kandy, Sri Lanka	A Buddha tooth (often described as left canine)	Long tradition + national shrine	Strong continuous worship and state protection	Early origin is mainly legend, not excavation	Medium (Wikipedia)
Lingguang Temple, China	Buddha tooth relic	State custody + documented shrine + diplomatic loans	Clear modern custody and official recognition	Original ancient chain is debated; other countries claim teeth too	Medium (Thailand Government Public Relations)
Bangkok, Thailand (host)	Tooth relic on loan from China	Modern government agreements + public display	Strong modern records with exact dates	Does not solve ancient origin questions	Medium (modern), unclear (ancient) (กระทรวงการต่างประเทศ)
Fo Guang Shan, Taiwan	Buddha tooth relic	Gift + certificate from Rinpoches	Clear named custodians and certificate story	Not an excavation; depends on trust networks	Medium (fgsbmc.org.tw)

Singapore BTRTM	Tooth relic said from Myanmar stupa	Temple claim + public display	Modern access and visibility	Expert doubts; size problem; DNA testing dispute	Low (National Library Board)
Ahin Posh Stupa (Afghanistan)	Tooth relics in gold reliquary	Excavation deposit + associated coins	Archaeological container context	“Buddha” identity still hard to prove biologically	Medium-High (as relic deposit), Low (as Buddha ID)
Shwedagon (Myanmar, replica)	Replica tooth relic	Official project note	Clear statement that it is a replica	Not the original tooth	High (as replica record) (shwedagonpagoda.org.mm)

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5. Discussion (expanded, with a clearer debate map)

5.1 Why tooth relics become “global”

Tooth relics travel because they are small, durable, and easy to enshrine. In many Buddhist cultures, a tooth can stand for the Buddha’s continuing presence. This makes tooth relics powerful in three ways:

1. **Religious power**: people feel close to the Buddha.
2. **Cultural power**: a relic can become a symbol of a city or nation (Kandy is a good example). (Wikipedia)
3. **Political power**: states can use relics in public ceremonies to build unity or friendship (Thailand–China case). (กระทรวงการต่างประเทศ)

So, tooth relics spread and multiply in meaning. They can also multiply in number, because different places claim to have “the” tooth.

5.2 Debate map: what is “strong evidence” and what is “weak evidence”?

For research, it helps to separate **two questions**:

- **Q1: Is this object truly an old human tooth (or tooth fragment)?**
- **Q2: Even if it is old and human, is it really the Buddha’s tooth?**

Many debates happen because people jump from Q1 to Q2 too quickly.

Below is a simple “evidence ladder” used by historians and archaeologists.

A) Stronger evidence (for historians)

This does not mean “proven Buddha tooth.” It means “stronger for history work.”

A1. Controlled excavation + sealed context
If a tooth fragment comes from a sealed stupa deposit (reliquary inside a chamber), that is strong evidence that it is a **relic deposit** from a Buddhist setting.
Example: Ahin Posh is described with a gold reliquary and multiple tooth relics in a deposit.

A2. Inscription that names “Buddha relics”
An inscription can show what donors believed and publicly declared.
Example: the book reports an early Kharoṣṭhī-inscribed silver reliquary linked with tooth relic and bone ash.

A3. Dating clues in the deposit (coins, style, stratigraphy)
Coins and known styles help date the deposit. This strengthens the history of the reliquary and the worship practice, even if the tooth’s owner is still unknown.

Limits even in “stronger” cases
Even when A1–A3 are present, the jump to “this is the Buddha” is still hard. Archaeology can show a relic cult existed early. It cannot easily prove a single person’s tooth in the 5th century BCE without more evidence.

B) Medium evidence (mixed strength)

These cases have strong **modern** records but weaker **ancient** proof.

B1. Long chain of worship + strong state protection
Kandy is the key example. It has deep cultural and religious importance, and long worship, but the earliest origin relies strongly on tradition stories. (Wikipedia)

B2. Official custody + modern documentation (but ancient origin unclear)
Lingguang Temple's relic is treated as a national treasure in modern sources, and modern records of loans are very clear. But, as AP notes, many places claim teeth, so provenance debates remain. (Thailand Government Public Relations)

B3. Religious authentication documents
Fo Guang Shan describes a certificate authenticated by many Rinpoches. For believers, this is strong. For historians, it is still "medium," because it is not an excavation context, and it depends on trust in custodianship. (fgsbmc.org.tw)

C) Weaker evidence (for historians)

These cases often have limited transparency or strong expert doubts.

C1. No clear archaeological record, and modern claim appears suddenly
The Singapore case is important here. The National Library Board summary says dental experts were quoted saying the tooth likely belonged to an animal. (National Library Board)

C2. Refusal of scientific tests
Reports that DNA tests were dismissed make the debate harder, because there is no shared method to settle Q1 (human vs animal). (buddhistchannel.tv)

Important note
A "weak evidence" label is not an attack on faith. It is only a research label. In religion, meaning can be real even when history is uncertain.

5.3 Why do “many teeth” exist? (A balanced explanation)

AP directly notes competing claims about possessing the Buddha’s tooth. (AP News)
This situation can happen for several reasons:

1. **Relic division stories**: Many Buddhist traditions tell of relic distribution after cremation. This can lead to multiple relic shrines.
2. **Later copying and “replicas”**: Some sites clearly use replicas, like the Shwedagon project note. (shwedagonpagoda.org.mm)
3. **Relic growth in tradition**: Over centuries, more relics may be claimed as Buddhism spreads.
4. **Politics and protection**: Some relics move due to war, colonial collecting, or royal gifts, which can break the chain of evidence.

A related warning comes from history: relics could be attacked or destroyed in conflict. A well-known example is the Portuguese capture and destruction of a tooth relic in **Goa (1561)**, discussed in a scholarly history study. (OUP Academic)

5.4 Where the Broken Front Tooth Relic fits in this debate map (why it is special)

Main focus relic is the **Broken Front Tooth Relic** linked with the **Kamari Stupa near Kabul**. The book describes it as a relic discovered in a stupa context and hidden in a small chamber, showing careful ritual protection.

The book also describes a **cylindrical beaten silver reliquary with a domed lid**, and inside it a **small fragment of a broken front tooth**.

So, in the debate map, this relic has **mixed** qualities:

What supports it (stronger side)

- It is tied to a **stupa deposit** and a **reliquary container**, not just a story without objects.

What weakens it (uncertain side)

- The book notes early explorers and older excavation activity in the region, where full modern excavation records are often limited or unclear. That makes provenance harder than a modern controlled excavation.

Why it is unique

- It is not presented as a perfect whole tooth. It is a **broken fragment**. This physical “brokenness” can carry strong Buddhist meaning (impermanence) while also reminding researchers that relics often survive in partial form. The book directly links this relic with ideas like impermanence (anicca) and continuing devotion.

In short, the Broken Front Tooth Relic is special because it sits at the meeting point of:

- archaeology (stupa + reliquary),
- devotion (a protected sacred object),
- and research limits (difficult proof for “it is the Buddha”).

5.5 Practical conclusion of the debate (what we can say safely)

A careful research position (balanced) is:

- We can often show that a tooth relic was treated as sacred in a Buddhist context.
- We can sometimes date the container and the deposit (coins, inscriptions, style).
- But proving “this tooth is the Buddha” is usually **not possible** with current public evidence, especially when relics are not available for open scientific study.

This is why a debate map is useful. It helps the paper stay respectful to faith while also staying strict about evidence.

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6. Conclusion

This paper studied Buddha tooth relics with a focus on archaeology and custodianship. ASI and related official sources help us understand how relics were found, recorded, stored, and displayed. Piprahwa is a key site for Buddha relic history, with strong evidence for bone relic deposits and later ASI excavation results.
Nagarjunakonda is also important, with an official history that links a relic find to a Great Stupa of the Buddha and to formal transfer and enshrinement at Sarnath. (Embassy of India Hanoi)

The main focus of this paper, the **Broken Front Tooth Relic**, stands out because it is a clear **tooth fragment** kept inside a silver reliquary, linked with a relic chamber description. It shows how even a small broken piece could become a major sacred object.

Future research ideas

- Museum record study of the Broken Front Tooth Relic (catalogue data, accession history).
- Scientific imaging (non-damaging) to describe the tooth fragment type and condition.
- Comparative study of reliquary shapes across Gandhāra and early Buddhist regions.

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Happy New Year
Date- 31/12/2025 , @ Bangkok , Thailand.